

HUD-VASH Notice to Continuums of Care

Homelessness remains a significant problem within the veteran community. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, it is estimated that there are approximately 154,000 veterans are homeless in this country on any given night. Additionally, based on a recent HUD report submitted to Congress, homeless veterans make up approximately 19 percent of all homeless adults who accessed emergency shelter or transitional housing in communities across the U.S.

On April 16, 2008, the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs announced a \$75 million joint initiative known as the Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH). HUD-VASH combines HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs at its medical centers and in the community. Under this initiative, an estimated 10,000 new vouchers are available to permanently house homeless veterans and their families, including homeless veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, in this therapeutic program.

For additional information on HUD-VASH, including the Federal Register Notices, the estimated number of vouchers available in your community through this program and the name of the Public Housing Agency (PHA) associated with each VA site, Continuums of Care (CoC) should go to the following website:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/index.cfm>. CoCs should also contact their local VAMC for specific information about how to refer homeless veterans in their jurisdiction for housing assistance through HUD-VASH.

Related HUD-VASH Information

(1) PIH HUD-VASH Operating Requirements – Complete Version:

<http://www.hud.gov/utilities/intercept.cfm?/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/docs/notice512.pdf>

(2) PIH (Headquarters) HUD-VASH Questions and Answers:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/docs/hudvashqa.pdf>

(3) MS PowerPoint slides related to HUD-VASH Satellite Broadcasts:

- September 19, 2008:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/docs/brdcst20080919.ppt>.

- May 8, 2008:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/docs/cm.ppt>.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/docs/oprq.ppt>.

Please go to HUD's Webcast webpage to view the actual broadcasts.

The following questions and answers are provided to assist CoCs to understand implementation of the HUD-VASH program. For your convenience, they are grouped together by topic.

Eligible Persons to be Served in HUD-VASH	
Question	Answer
1. Who is eligible to be served under the HUD-VASH?	Veterans who meet VA health care eligibility requirements and who meet HUD's definition of "homeless", <u>with their families</u> , are eligible to apply for housing choice voucher assistance through the HUD-VASH program. Eligible veterans must need and agree to participate in case management services provided by the VA in order to maintain adequate independent living in the community. Participants can be homeless veterans who have been living on the streets, in emergency shelters, referred from Mc-Kinney-Vento funded transitional housing or from other VA homeless residential programs.
2. Who is considered homeless?	<p>A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the three places described below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings; (2) an emergency shelter; or (3) transitional housing for homeless persons and who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter. <p>If a person is in one of the three categories listed above, but most recently spent less than 30 days in a jail or institution, he/she continues to qualify as coming from one of these categories.</p> <p>In addition to coming from the above three categories, HUD-VASH may also serve veterans experiencing the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (4) eviction within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing; (5) discharge within a week from an institution in which the person has been a resident for 30 or more consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and he/she lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

Eligible Persons to be Served in HUD-VASH (continued)	
Question	Answer
3. Does HUD-VASH serve persons at risk of becoming homeless?	<p>No, except for situations 4 and 5 described in Question 1 above. By law, only those persons who are homeless may be served by the HUD-VASH program. Persons at risk of becoming homeless, including persons who are “doubled up,” or persons who are “near homelessness,” should be referred to another funding source. HUD administers the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) program that can fund homelessness prevention activities. A variety of other programs, such as Section 8, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME, serve low-income persons who may be at risk of becoming homeless due to poor housing conditions, overcrowding or other reasons. Contact your local HUD field office for more information on these programs.</p>
4. Will a homeless veteran be denied assistance to obtain a HCV rental unit if the veteran has a criminal history or spent time in jail or prison?	<p>The VA Medical Center will screen all veteran families in accordance with its screening criteria (which includes eligibility and appropriateness for participation). By agreeing to administer the HUD-VASH program, the PHA is relinquishing its authority to screen families in accordance with regular HCV program rules and PHA policies with one exception. PHAs will still be required to prohibit admission if any household member is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program. However, under the HUD-VASH program, PHAs will not have the authority to screen potentially eligible families or deny assistance for any grounds such as broad denial for violations of the HCV program requirements or specific denial for those with a criminal or substance abuse history.</p>

Eligible Persons to be Served in HUD-VASH (continued)	
Question	Answer
5. Are veterans served under this program required to have chronic mental illnesses or chronic substance abuse disorders?	No, this HUD-VASH program does not require a chronic mental illness or chronic substance abuse disorder in order to qualify. This is in contrast to the earlier version of the HUD-VASH program of the early 1990s. HUD has waived the requirement that only homeless veterans with chronic mental illness or chronic substance use disorders are eligible for VASH vouchers, and that treatment for these disorders is a condition of receiving assistance. However, eligible homeless veterans must need and participate in a case management program designed to support independent living skills and recovery from the issues that led to homelessness. All homeless veterans are eligible for this program, including returning veterans who participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF), excluding homeless veterans that are subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program.
Allocation of Vouchers	
Question	Answer
1. How did VA and HUD determine the allocation of vouchers?	VA, in consultation with HUD, took into account the population of homeless veterans needing services in the area, the number of homeless veterans served by the homeless programs at each VA Medical Center (VAMC) during FY 2006 and FY 2007, geographic distribution, and VA case management resources. The number of HUD-VASH vouchers awarded to each PHA was determined by HUD and VA. Approximately 35 rental vouchers were awarded for each professional, full-time HUD-VASH case manager either already in place or to be hired at the local VAMC. HUD-VASH vouchers may be reallocated in the future based on need and usage.
2. How can I find out the number of vouchers that were allocated for my jurisdiction?	Continuums of Care can find out how many vouchers have been allocated for their jurisdictions by going to http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/index.cfm and clicking on the button entitled “VA sites and PHAs”.

Referral and Outreach	
Question	Answer
1. How do McKinney-Vento funded homeless providers refer homeless veterans for permanent housing assistance through the HUD-VASH program?	Referrals to HUD-VASH may be assisted by two principal sources: (1) VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Outreach staff who may make direct referrals from the community (e.g., through shelters, food kitchens) to HUD-VASH; or (2) VA Homeless Programs such as VA Homeless Residential Treatment or Grant and Per Diem programs. Community resources are encouraged to refer homeless veterans to the HCHV program for assistance.
2. How will CoCs be able to refer homeless veterans to HUD-VASH if the veteran lives far away from a VA Medical Center? This may be especially true for some Balance of State, Statewide, or regional CoCs.	VA, in consultation with HUD, identified 132 VAMC participants in the program. Program sites include at least one VA facility and PHA in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. Through outreach conducted by VA and/or the CoC, homeless veterans may be referred to the nearest VAMC for the HUD-VASH program.
Homeless Reporting	
Question	Answer
1. If a homeless veteran lived in McKinney-Vento funded transitional housing and moves into permanent housing through the HUD-VASH program, how shall I count that veteran for purposes of the Homeless Population and Subpopulations Chart?	Once a person moves into permanent housing, he/she is considered a formerly homeless person and should not be counted as part of the sheltered homeless population.
2. How do I report on the APR when a homeless veteran moves from McKinney-Vento housing to a housing choice voucher unit obtained through HUD-VASH?	Homeless veterans that are moving from McKinney-Vento funded housing to HCV units under HUD-VASH should be reported as moving to Permanent Housing- c. Section 8, under "Destination."
3. For purposes of completing the e-Housing Inventory Chart (e-HIC) for the CoC, should the CoC also include the units allocated for our jurisdiction through HUD-VASH?	Yes, these units should be included in the e-HIC, since these housing choice vouchers have been exclusively dedicated to serving homeless persons.

Supportive Services	
Question	Answer
1. Can a homeless person moving from SHP housing into permanent housing provided through HUD-VASH receive services under SHP for an extended period of time?	Upon leaving an SHP Permanent Housing program and moving into housing not funded by McKinney-Vento, homeless participants are no longer eligible to receive our supportive services. Usually, under SHP, a person living in Transitional Housing is eligible to receive supportive services for up to six months after leaving and moving into permanent housing not subsidized by McKinney-Vento. However, homeless veterans participating in HUD-VASH are eligible to receive ongoing VA case management, including health care and other supportive services, as long as they remain in the leased housing choice voucher unit and will probably have no need for services provided through the SHP program.
2. Can a homeless veteran decline case management and other services provided through the VA and still obtain permanent housing rental assistance under HUD-VASH?	As a condition of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance, a HUD-VASH eligible family <u>must receive case management services</u> (e.g., outpatient health services, housing search assistance, recovery support, money management assistance, etc.) provided from the VA Medical Center. However, a VAMC determination that the participant family no longer requires case management is not grounds for termination of assistance. The PHA may offer the family continued HCV assistance through one of its regular vouchers, to free up the HUD-VASH voucher for another eligible family referred by the VAMC.